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Mich. Body Shop Owners Defraud Insurers of Millions, Cox Says

A woman and two sons who run a string of Detroit-area auto body shops have been charged with conspiracy, fraud and racketeering on accusations that they tricked insurers out of millions of dollars through false claims.

Attorney General Mike Cox said that the investigation dates back to September 2002, when State Farm Insurance investigators noticed a series of suspicious claims from Somerset Auto Center in Detroit.

Investigators said the first suspicious claims involved false reports of air-bag theft and "enhancing collision damage," Cox said in a news release.

On Monday, Cox announced the arrests of a man he identified as the ringleader, Norman Dehko, 35, of Orchard Lake; his brother, Dickow Dehko, 31; and their mother, Latifa Dehko, both of West Bloomfield.

Charges against the three include racketeering, conspiracy and fraud, Cox said. The racketeering charge carries a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, with lesser penalties for the other charges.

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Others also are expected to be arrested and charged within days, Cox said.

There are no listed telephone numbers for Latifa or Dickow Dehko, while a number listed for Norman Dehko was being checked for trouble Monday night. There was no answer after business hours Monday at Somerset Auto Center.

Al Dabish, 34, a cousin of the Dehkoses, said the family runs a legitimate business.

“It’s all about jealousy,” Dabish, a Detroit police officer, told the *Detroit Free Press*. “It’s other shops calling on them, and it’s all false.”

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